

Title: Christ's Love in Waiting

Text: John 11: 1-53

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John 11: 1: Now a certain *man* was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2: (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3: Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

What a petition? Usually, the greatest need is expressed in the shortest petition. “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*” “*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*” “*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*”

They acknowledged Christ as their sovereign and they his servants: “*Lord*”. They expressed their need for Christ to take knowledge of them: “*Behold*”. And they based their petition on something far better than their own will—“*he whom thou lovest is sick.*”

John 11: 4: When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

Believer, when the trial comes, rest assured that “*it is for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*” And the next verse tells us it is for the good of those Christ loves.

John 11: 5: Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6: When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

Our Lord loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus. For that reason, when he heard that Lazarus was sick he did not rush to where they were right away. He did not speak the word and immediately heal Lazarus. No, because he loved them he waited. He abode two days still in the same place where he was.

Subject: Christ Love in Waiting

When we enter a trial, we send our petition to God through Christ our Mediator just as Mary and Martha sent Christ word through a mediator. But sometimes it seems like the Lord does not hear our cry. Things continue the same. We get no relief from the trial. Sometimes we even feel as though all communion with Christ has been cut off and we have no strength at all.

Proposition: Our Lord's delays are not denials: because he loves his elect, he waits that he might be glorified and that he might work that which is good for his child.

Divisions: I want to show you four reasons our Lord waits which are revealed in this account of the Lord raising Lazarus from the dead. In our trials, these are four reasons the Lord waits 1) To teach us to lay down our lives as he laid down his life for us; 2) To teach us to believe his word; 3) To make us behold his glory; 4) To bless our brethren around us

HE TEACHES US TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES

John 11: 7: Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. 8: *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? 9: Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. 10: But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

By waiting, the Lord teaches us to deny ourselves for his sake as he denied himself for us. He teaches us to lay down our lives for him, as he laid down his life for us.

Lazarus, Mary and Martha were in Bethany near Jerusalem—that whole area was called Judea. That is where the self-righteous Pharisee's lived who hated Christ more than anyone. They rejected the Giver of the Law, the Fulfiller of the Law, the very Righteousness of God, for Moses and the law and their own works. They hated our Redeemer most because he declared that harlots and publicans would enter the kingdom before the self-righteous and the self-sanctifiers. He came to fulfill the law therefore he gets all the glory. He is the LORD our Righteousness! For this the self-righteous hate him.

But understand, Christ is God the Son, all-knowing. He knew he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He knew the Father would use it to bring many to believe on his name. And he knew this would be the last straw for the Jews that hated him. After he raised Lazarus from the dead,

John 11: 46: But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. 47: Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48: If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49: And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 50: Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51: And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die

for that nation; 52: And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Caiaphas did not mean to preach the gospel of substitution. In his mind, he was saying “to retain our own political positions of power, this Jesus must be slain rather than the Romans be provoked into tearing down our playhouse.” But like Balaam of old, God put these words in the mouth of this blind, Christ-hating Pharisee who was high priest so that everyone would heed his word and fulfill God’s eternal will. And that is what they did.

John 11: 53: Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death

Our Lord knew this would be the catalyst that would lead to his crucifixion. Yet, even though our Lord knew raising Lazarus would result in his crucifixion, he waited two days until word spread of Lazarus’ death, so plenty of Jews would be at his tomb to witness him raise Lazarus from death.

So Christ was laying down his life that he might give Lazarus life. By that, he was illustrating to us how he laid down his life, that he might give all his elect life.

So he was speaking of doing God’s will, when “*Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.*” Christ is saying, “God sent me to do his will and finish the work he gave me to do *while it is day*. For his sake, I must deny myself and lay down my life that I might give my people life. But I will not stumble because I am doing my Father’s will therefore his light shall light my way.”

“*But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.*” If a man go against God’s will, attempting to prolong his day, attempting to save his life, he shall stumble because there is no light in him because he goes against God’s will. Christ is saying, “*If I fear the Jews and try to save my own life then I will lose it because I will be walking in darkness by not walking in God’s will.*”

These two statements is another way of saying, “*Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*” (Lu 17: 33) So his waiting was Christ denying himself. He was laying down his life, not only for Lazarus sake, but for the sake of his elect, that he might raise us from the dead according to the will of God our Father.

Therefore, take this trial with this sick child in our congregation for example. The Lord could have healed her right away and ended the trial. But by waiting, he makes us deny ourselves. He makes us take up our cross of suffering. He is sweetly forcing us to lay down our lives in submission to his will. By this he reminds us how he denied himself, took up his cross and laid down his life for us.

And by waiting, he reminds us—“*whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.*” (Mk 8: 35) Did he save us by losing his life? Indeed, he purged our sins, obtained eternal redemption for us and perfected forever those God elected. So seeing that our eternal good came from him denying himself, we know that his waiting to make us deny ourselves will be for our good. The apostle Paul said, “I want to know the fellowship of his sufferings that I might be made conformable to his death.” (Php 3: 10) It seems Thomas got the lesson and was made willing to lay down his life. “*Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*”

Brethren, if Christ waiting in the trial makes us submissive to God’s will so that we are more ready to lay down our life for the sake of Christ and for the good of our brethren then it is well worth the wait!

HE TEACHES US TO BELIEVE HIS WORD

John 11: 14: Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. 15: And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

The Lord Jesus waited so that he was not there when Lazarus died to the intent (or for the purpose) that he might teach his apostles to believe his word, that he is the resurrection and the life.

Then he teaches Martha the same.

John 11: 17: Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already. 18: Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: 19: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20: Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat *still* in the house. 21: Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22: But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee. 23: Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24: Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25: Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? 27: She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

When the Lord increases our faith the first thing he does is teach us not to trust our faith because we do not have much. Martha believed that whatsoever he asked “*of God, God would give it thee*”; but the Lord Jesus taught to her, “*I am God.*” She believed that her brother would rise again “*in the resurrection*”; but the Lord taught her, “*I am the resurrection, and the life.*” She believed her brother would live again “*at the last day*”; but the Lord taught her, “*He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*”

So by the time the Lord said, “*Believest thou this?*” by the gospel he preached to her he had effectually given her faith to believe his word that he is the resurrection and the life. So she answered him, “*Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*” The Lord waits that he might teach us to believe his word.

Then he teaches Mary the same.

John 11: 28: And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee...32: Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 33: When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34: And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35: Jesus wept. 36: Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37: And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? 38: Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39: Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days.

During trials, our unbelief returns quickly. Soon after he strengthens our faith to believe he indeed is the resurrection, unbelief takes over and we are saying, “*Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*” But this too is to keep us ever mindful that it is Christ our Life who maintains our faith!

John 11: 40: Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God? 41: Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42: And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Be sure to get this: just as faith is the gift of God by grace, apart from our works lest any man should boast, so is the maintaining and strengthening of our faith. Often it is by making us wait in the trial that the Lord does just that.

God promised Isaac more children than the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. But Rebekah was barren. The Lord was teaching them that he alone fulfills his promised word, not us. So Isaac and Rebekah waited. In the meantime, Isaac’s brother, Ishmael, who God cast out, had twelve sons who he grew up to be princes. But God made Isaac and Rebekah wait twenty years before God raised up life in Rebekah’s womb with Jacob and Esau. Yet, God’s blessing was upon Isaac, Rebekah and their son Jacob, not upon Ishmael or any of his sons. God was teaching Isaac and Rebekah to believe God’s word, that he alone is the life.

So remember, delay does not mean denial with God. By waiting, Christ bring us to see we have no faith of ourselves. He makes us see we should not trust in our faith because we have so very little. He makes us see how quickly unbelief takes over. Then Christ strengthens our faith in him. So by waiting, Christ teaches us to believe his word, that Christ really is our Life. He alone gives faith and he alone maintains our faith.

HE MAKES US BEHOLD HIS GLORY

John 11: 40: Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?...43: And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44: And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

By waiting, the Lord Jesus makes us behold his glory in his power to raise the dead to life.

John 5:21: as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

At our regeneration, Christ quickens us dead sinners to spiritual life. During the life of faith, Christ renews our inner man continually. In the end, there will be no sting of death when our bodies die because our spirit shall live and be with the Lord immediately by Christ our Life. Then when Christ returns, Christ shall raise our bodies from the grave like he did Lazarus. Christ is our Life in every way. “*He that lives and believes in Christ shall never die.*”

But in order to makes us behold his glory more clearly, Christ waits during the trial until we have no strength in ourselves so that it is obvious to us that it is his glory in his power that quickened us. The apostle Paul said we are,

2 Corinthians 4: 10: Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11: For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh...

What does he mean by dying in the body that life also might be manifest in our body?

2 Corinthians 4: 16...though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

So in every trial, Christ made Paul experience that he was totally weak in his flesh but he also made him experience the power of Christ resting upon him by whom his inner man was renewed. So Paul saw Christ's glory. He was brought to rejoice that "*when I am weak, then am I strong.*" (2 Cor 12: 10)

With Lazarus our Lord waited until it was obvious he was dead so that his glory was undeniably manifest in his power to raise Lazarus from the dead. Likewise, sometimes the Lord waits until he has whittled a congregation down to where it appears dead. He waits till the members see they have no strength among themselves to carry on the work. Then Christ will quicken the members and use fewer to do more. So by waiting, he makes it obvious that the glory belongs to Christ by whose power life was breathed into the congregation and they accomplished what he would have them to do!

Another reason he waits to show his glory is when his child keeps trying to strengthen ourselves. On one occasion, the children of Israel looked to Egypt for strength instead of waiting on the Lord as Isaiah told them to do. So Isaiah said, "*And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.*" (Is 30: 18) The Lord waited until Israel had no strength in themselves like a tree with all its branches broken off. He did it that he might be gracious. He waited that it might be obvious that the Lord breathed life into them so that he alone might receive all the glory and be exalted by them. He waited because he knows what is best to do for his people—"for the LORD is a God of judgment." So Isaiah waited on the LORD to work this work and the LORD blessed him so that Isaiah said—"blessed are all they that wait for him." Isaiah is saying to us, "When you see your brethren suffering in a trial because they keep trying to strengthen themselves like as I saw the children of Israel do then just wait on the Lord; the LORD will do what is best for our suffering brethren so that it is obvious it is by his power; this way he gets all the glory to himself; this is how he blessed me as I waited on him to work in the children of Israel and that is why I say, '*blessed are all they that wait for him.*'"

So brethren, again, delays are not denials for God's child. He waits that he might be gracious to us by making us behold he alone is the power to raise us from death to life so that we might give him all the praise and glory for his mercy upon us.

TO BLESS OUR BRETHERN AROUND US

John 11: 45: Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

By waiting the Lord not only blessed Martha, Mary and Lazarus, he blessed his elect among the Jews that came to the graveside in those two days while he waited. It was grace to his elect alone because the rest of those Jews ran off mad to report it to the Pharisees.

So it is with us. By waiting, the Lord not only blesses us who are in the trial, he also blesses his elect around us. I was in a trial once with a dear brother who suffered with me. As I saw the way Christ made gave him strength to endure that trial, Christ strengthened me using my dear brother. It was just like Christ giving these elect Jews life and faith through beholding him raise Lazarus. My Lord always strengthens me when I behold one of his little ones endure affliction, persecution, distress, and yet standing with Christ even when rejected by their dearest loved ones. I know it is by his grace and it strengthens my heart.

Brethren, for you who are suffering in trial, I know the cross you bear is heavy. I know you grow weary and faint continually. But hear God's promise:

Isaiah 40: 30: Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

There are more reasons Christ waits. But we have seen four. In the midst of trial let us remind ourselves of these four things:

- Christ waits to teach me to deny myself and take up my cross of suffering and lay down my life as he did for me.
- He waits to teach me to believe his word that he is my Life.
- My gracious Redeemer waits until I have no strength so it is obvious that he raised me up so that I will see his glory and know that he alone has power to quicken me from the dead.
- And he waits that he might not only bless me but my brethren around me.

This is Christ's love in waiting! His love and grace makes the wait worthwhile!

Amen!